

*Hudson Bay Railway*

Mr. DUFF: I may say in answer to my hon. friend that the reason I am only quoting from one report is that I do not want to take up too much time to-day. Moreover, I do not think it would help the case of my hon. friend if I did quote from other reports. For instance, I think it was my hon. friend (Mr. Knox) who quoted the opinion of the former Minister of Railways, Mr. Cochrane, "that the strait and the bay could be kept open by means of wireless telegraph." Now, I would like to know how either the strait or the bay could be kept open by that means.

Mr. KNOX: Would it not be an aid to navigation?

Mr. DUFF: I understand that a certain amount of electricity would—

Mr. KNOX: Would it not be an aid to navigation?

Mr. DUFF: I cannot see how the wireless would be an aid to navigation either at the terminals or at Port Nelson when a vessel was off cape Chidley or half way in the strait trying to make her way through the ice. You could not put a wireless station out on a pan of ice so as to be of any use to a vessel between Port Nelson and cape Chidley.

Mr. KNOX: It would not be necessary to do that. We have islands in the straits. The strait is five hundred miles long and between thirty-five and one hundred miles wide and one of these islands could be used for the purpose.

Mr. DUFF: If the dimensions given by my hon. friend are true one of these islands would not be of very much use; a tower many hundred feet high would have to be erected in order to look out over the ice and see whether there was ice or open water so as to advise steamers coming round cape Chidley.

Mr. BIRD: I quoted an incident showing that an ice breaker was stuck in the ice at the eastern end of the strait and at the same time the Sheba had a clear passage all the way through. In that case a radio would have been of service in pointing out the open channel.

Mr. DUFF: I may say to my hon. friend that I had a similar experience when a ship that I was on board of, called the Greenland was caught in the ice one spring and had to stay there for thirty-two days with a catch of seals on board. Only about ten miles away there was open water and other vessels were able to get through. They saw our predicament and when they got home re-

[Mr. Knox.]

ported that we were stuck fast in the ice without any seals. That was the case in regard to the vessels of which he speaks. There may be a lead or channel of open water through the ice caused by the wind or the current where vessels can pass. Not far away other vessels may be caught fast in the ice. But let me tell my hon. friend that no shipping man is going to send his vessel into Hudson bay if he is likely to meet with that danger.

Mr. BIRD: Does my hon. friend apply his statement to the early part of July or to the whole of the period I have referred to?

Mr. DUFF: This investigation showed the conditions in different months—in July, August and September. The hon. member spoke about the experience of the Minto. I would advise him, if he wants some information about Hudson bay and Hudson strait, to consult Captain John Reid who was commander of the Minto when she was in Hudson bay. Captain Reid has enlarged photographs showing the exact conditions in Hudson bay and Hudson strait during the period he was there. Looking at these photographs any reasonable man will be convinced that the navigation of either the bay or the strait under such conditions is a very difficult proposition. I repeat that I am not opposed to this route if it can be shown to be practicable and would be glad if I could get evidence showing that it is feasible. We have not all the information that we should have on this project and for that reason I would suggest to the government that they should make further inquiry before spending any more money on it. From the financial standpoint I think it would be unwise—and I am sure my hon. friends from the West will agree with me—to spend any large sum of money in continuing the railway to Port Nelson, or in the building of terminals, or the construction of steamers, to open this route, until we are possessed of further information. Before spending any further large sums of money parliament and the government should go very slowly in this matter.

What I would suggest, in fairness to my hon. friends from the West who desire to secure a fresh outlet for the grain and other commodities of the West is commendable, is that parliament should ask the government to have a proper survey made of the whole field both with regard to the railway to Hudson bay and the terminals there, and with regard to the feasibility of the navigation of the bay and strait. I would suggest that practical men such as Captain Reid, Captain